

## The Turn of The Scale

By KATHERINE S. MACQUOID

"Will you ask him? You will, won't you? I shall be ever so grateful."

While she spoke, Ruth Mantons' clear brown eyes were full of loving thankfulness. As she ended she reddened, and the bright eyes dropped in confusion as if she had said something wrong.

Silence followed. She looked up in sudden alarm.

Her guardian's tall, quiet sister, Miss Willmott, had risen, and was staring strangely at her. The suspicion in her companion's hard blue eyes brought back the young girl's courage. She smiled and looked at ease, while she waited for Miss Willmott's answer.

"Very well; I will speak to Michael when he comes in."

"Thank you," Ruth said. She gathered up her writing materials and went out of the old, quaint parlor, past its open lattice windows, which let in the scent of hyacinths and narcissus, then up the uneven oak stairs which led to her dainty bedroom.

Seated by the window Ruth laughed, then a sob rose in her firm, round throat, and she bent her head till her forehead rested on the window ledge.

"I wish I'd never come to Logans," she thought. "What would dear mother and Aunt Lucy think of me? Ah! if they had lived!"

With quick, nervous she asked herself if she really and truly wished she had never seen her guardian.

More than a year ago, when Ruth left school, she had gone to live with her invalid mother and her mother's sister, Aunt Lucy, in Kensington. Within a short time Aunt Lucy died. Mrs. Mantons was not long before she followed her sister, and Ruth was left alone.

Mr. Searle, her mother's executor and only surviving friend, told the sorrowing girl that in accordance with her father's will she must in future live under the care of her appointed guardian, Mr. Michael Willmott, at Logans, in Essex, a small property which he farmed himself.

You will find him, I am told, a plain, kindly man, always very busy. His home is kept by his sister, I fancy she will make you very comfortable."

The girl had a spirit of her own.

"I prefer to earn my own living," she said.

Gray-haired Mr. Searle fidgeted with his eyeglasses. Of all things he disliked modern notions in women.

"You are not twenty, Ruth; you have to remember you are under Mr. Willmott's control and guardianship until you are of age. You will then come into possession of your small income. You will not be dependent upon Mr. Willmott in any monetary sense. I shall pay him for your expenses, and every quarter I shall send you a small check, which you must cash, but if you read the copy of your father's will which I sent you you will find these directions set down. I add, however, on my own account, that if you are not happy with the Willmotts, write to me at once."

Now, at the end of the first year, the girl had written to Mr. Searle, "I am not happy. Will you and my godmother be good enough to take me in while I settle my future plans?"

She knew she could not remain with the Searles. He had refused to undertake her guardianship, because, good man though he was, he was cursed with a wild spirit of mischief, a pleasant fellow with fascinating manners, but so erratic in his ways that Ruth's mother had never permitted David Searle to visit her.

"I will only stay a few days with the Searles," Ruth smiled and told herself that David Searle was not an ogre, even if he should happen to be at home during her visit.

She had been at first very happy at Logans and charmed with its inhabitants. Mr. Willmott, though middle aged, was not nearly so old as she expected him to be. She found him, when the first shyness was off, a delightful companion. Later he had altogether changed; no more pleasant rides and walks together.

Ruth had an especial gift for music and played the violin very well; her guardian had a good voice, and she had often accompanied his songs. Of late, when she asked him to sing to an accompaniment she had been diligently practicing, he answered that he was too busy and must spend the evening in his office. She could not help feeling that he tried to avoid her.

It seemed to her curious that her guardian's sister had also changed. At the outset Miss Willmott had been as hard as her own cameo-like face. She had perfect features, a distinguished appearance; she was in every way a good housekeeper. But though her bright eyes were full of sympathy, her arrangements of the old manor house were very comfortable she decided that her hostess was repelling. Now the brother and sister had exchanged characters. Mr. Willmott, in addition to his cold abruptness, was sometimes absent for weeks, while his sister's manner had completely thawed. She talked pleasantly to the girl. Once or twice she had kissed her when Ruth said good-night.

Ruth was glad of the change, though she had little sympathy with Miss Willmott. Her heart ached for the simple happiness of those early days. If she could only discover why her guardian disliked her!

She came at last to the painful conclusion that she and not Mr. Willmott was to blame. She had, she fancied, been gushing and foolish; her head had been turned by his kind and ready sympathy. He had seen her folly and longed to be rid of her.

This idea prompted her to write Mr. Searle, announcing her immediate return to Kensington.

She looked out sadly over the green, sloping meadows, ended by woods which just now were gemmed with the gold and purple and creamy white of anemones and shaking violets and bright-eyed celandines. Ruth had been in the woods this morning, and had sighed heavily as she remembered last spring when her guardian walked beside her and shared her joy at sight of the exquisite blossoms.

She suddenly remembered that even in those early days he used sometimes to leave her abruptly. To-morrow she was going away to begin the self-reliance life which had once appeared so attractive. How dull and lonely it now seemed, without a companion to whom she could turn for sympathy.

"Yet it is safer," she thought, "for me to live alone. I shall not again have friendship where it is not desired and is, therefore, flung back to me as superfluous."

Miss Willmott stood looking down at the table beside her. After a few minutes she seemed pleased with its dark, highly-polished mahogany surface, her pale face showed a tinge of color and her gray eyes smiled brightly. Then she sat down to think.

She loved her brother intensely. She had never loved anyone else, he was her life. Some years younger than she was, she had been mother to him as well as a sister ever since she, a young girl, was left motherless.

HE WASN'T TAKING CHANCES. Wags—Can you cook? Miss Wags—Sure. Wags—Do you play the piano and sing? Miss Wags—No. Wags—Will you be my wife?

erless. She had noted his changed manner towards Ruth, but had understood it differently. At first, on learning the girl's age, she had opposed her coming to Logans. When Michael overruled her opposition she determined that Ruth should not find her home with them pleasant.

Ruth's proposal to go to the Searles rejoiced her hostess. She had heard the scandal about handsome, extravagant David Searle; he would captivate a lively girl like Ruth at first sight. The young pair would make a match of it, and for a time doubtless the young fellow would reform. Anyway she and Michael would be left in peace. Then came a revelation. Something constrained in the girl's usually frank manner, her sudden blush, went straight as an arrow to Hilda Willmott and transfixed her with jealousy. Ruth was artful. She had deceived her. She loved Michael in spite of all. That was why she shrank from telling him she wished to go away.

Miss Willmott drew her long fingers slowly across her gray-green eyes, veiled just now by their light lashes; then she sat down again with a deep breath of relief. She had shielded Michael before to-day. If he really was unwise enough to care for Ruth she could now save him from folly. She hesitated over ways and means. She promised herself she would only tell him the truth. But she hesitated again—well, there was no need to tell everything, she thought, for appearances might be nearer the truth than her mere guesses. This was a sop to an uneasy conscience.

She threw back her head and told herself firmly that she was not untruthful; why should she fear that she might lie to Michael? She was always right; he had often told her so in the old days, when her company had been enough for him. Why need she mistrust her own judgment?

She heard the door of his office open and felt sure he was coming to tell her he was again leaving home. This would indeed be a help; it would make everything easy. On his return she need only say that Ruth had asked leave to visit the Searles and had said she needed change.

She waited, but Michael did not come straight to her parlor. She heard him go round to the stables. She sat waiting; something told her he would come.

So he did an hour later, with the news she hoped for. He was going to Scotland for a week, and must start early next morning. Michael lingered as though he had more to say, but he kept silence. At last Hilda rose and moved towards the door. Her brother began to speak and then hesitated.

"What is it, dear?" "Do you think Ruth is well? She looks pale and thin."

His sister's anger rose in a sudden wave, but she kept it down.

"I believe she has tired of our quiet ways," she smiled, compassionately. "She wants amusement, younger companions. Is it not natural at her age?"

This question was in answer to her brother's start of seeming alarm at her first words.

"Yes," he said, sadly, "of course we make dull company for a young, bright girl. She wants change. Suppose you take her to Norwich, show her the Cathedral and so on. She cares for old buildings. You might go by way of Ely and Ipswich. This side of England is new to her."

Miss Willmott was mad with jealousy. Her anger broke into a laugh.

"Sometimes I wish you'd had a younger sister, then you'd understand girls. I really don't think Ruth is pining for cathedrals."

Michael looked hard at her. Hilda's only fault, he thought, was that of too great reticence in speech, yet this very quality made her superior to ordinary women who talked "nothing" by the hour.

"You mean something by that, Hilda. What do you think Ruth wants?" "If I do not think dear boy—I know that she wants to see Mr. Searle. You should hear her talk of him. Is his name David?"

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Michael bade her good-bye. He had to go and make a good growth, so that if covered for the winter with leaves or straw held in place with a few evergreen boughs, they would reward their caretaker in early spring with a mass of beautiful bloom.

The bulbs of the stately Madonna, or Anemone, which should be put into the earth in August. "This," writes Gertrude Jekyll, "may take to be the oldest of its kind in cultivation. It has been with us since the sixteenth century. Yet of all kinds known to gardens this is the most precious. Now it will do well in this sort of soil, again in quite the opposite. But in general a loam of rich and holding character is advantageous for this plant."

It makes several inches of growth in the fall, and so should be carefully protected with straw, etc., during the winter storms.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY. In Germany workmen are visited at their homes on pay days by savings bank officials to collect their savings for banking.

Official statistics show that there are 17,000,000 children in Russia between the ages of six and fourteen receiving absolutely no education.

Women exhibitors' work will be placed side by side with that of men at the St. Louis exhibition. It will also be judged by the same standards by the same juries.

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It seems to me there is something else which makes you wish to leave Logans. Have you not another motive?" She felt that only courage would save her from self-betrayal.

"And if I have spoken as though she said—that is not your business."

For an instant her eyes met his boldly, his persistence was making her angry; then they dropped again.

He bowed, still looking steadily at the changing color in her cheeks and her trembling lips, which assured him she was hiding some secret from his jealous scrutiny.

He had time to go through his London business before the next train started.

There was still half-an-hour to spare when he came back. He took his ticket for Warley and then walked to the bookstall to get some papers for Ruth and Hilda.

A train was coming in, and he looked mechanically at the passengers as they turned back, rather than with the idea of seeing faces he knew.

He gave no sudden start that he pushed against a fretful old man who was making his way through the newly-arrived passengers; he snarled out:

"Confound the fellow! Why don't he move like other people!" Michael went on till he stood by the open door of the train, and he looked at the girl within it on to the platform, but she drew back and seemed alarmed.

"Why is it?" Michael said, gravely. "Don't you know me? What are you doing here?"

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"Ah, yes," he answered, calmly, "but I did not know you were going so soon."

IV. The sigh of Ruth, first pale with alarm, then blushing under his fixed gaze, greatly disturbed him, but he soon recovered outward serenity. He took the girl to a waiting-room, then he saw after her luggage and thought out his plans.

He saw that he must go with her to Mrs. Searle, but she must first be told the truth about David. There would be still time, he thought, to take her back to Logans if, on hearing his warning, she should change her mind.

Meantime, Ruth was becoming more and more vexed both with herself and with her guardian. He had looked at her first so suspiciously and then so strangely that she longed to get away from him and find her self alone in a cab driving to Mrs. Searle's.

She turned her head and saw him at the door of the waiting-room.

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## SPHINX LORE

Enigmatic Knots of Odd and Ingenious Kind for the Leisure Hour.

(Any communication intended for this department should be addressed to E. R. Chadbourne, Lewiston, Maine.)

632.—REBUS.

Large ships may sail the ocean blue; In my little frail canoe, Can never go to lands remote.

Not on the raging main aloft, Of wind and waves the cruel sport, Beset by dangers not a few, On many seas, from port to port.

Like that sage voyager of note, So lily used at Spanish Court, Who braved the deep, its perils, too, And sought the fabled golden shore, Whose flag and ships shall ever float, On many seas, from port to port.

OSCEOLA.

633.—ANAGRAM.

—Comrades, I'm a Free Home— On many seas, from port to port, I do not care to risk my boat.

Large ships may sail the ocean blue; In my little frail canoe, Can never go to lands remote.